VIRTUES OF A RELIGIOUS SUPERIOR

ST. BONAVENTURE

Bonaventura, Saint, Cardinal, 1221-1274

THE VIRTUES OF A RELIGIOUS SUPERIOR

(DE SEX ALIS SERAPHIM)

Instructions by the Seraphic Doctor,
ST. BONAVENTURE

TRANSLATED FROM THE LATIN BY
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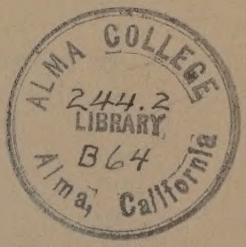

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THE VIRTUES OF A RELIGIOUS SUPERIOR

PROLOGUE

"Give an occasion to a wise man, and wisdom shall be added to him." [1]

As an intelligent man, who frequently becomes wiser through the folly of others, finds even in trifling occurrences matter for increasing his store of knowledge, so newly appointed superiors, who may not be fully prepared for distinguishing between what is right and what is wrong in the discharge of their duties, may find inducements in this treatise to give the matter more earnest reflection and seek from the study of the imperfections here described to acquire a better knowledge of the higher and more useful things as well as of many others

[1] Prov. 9, 9.

necessary to a religious superior in the government of inferiors. For we read that scientists have been led to deduce certain practical principles from the careful study of the habits of certain animals.[2]

[2] St. Isidore, *Etymolog.*, C. 19, n. 9.

CHAPTER I

THE SELECTION OF SUPERIORS

1. "These things I write to thee, . . . that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God." [1] The Apostle wrote two Epistles to his disciple Timothy, whom he had assigned as Bishop to the Church at Ephesus, teaching him how he ought to conduct himself in the office committed to his care, in order that, having learned from him how to lead a holy life, he might also learn through him how to govern others in a useful and meritorious manner. For there is a vast difference between knowing how to be submissive and humble, how to live in peace with others, and how to rule others in a useful manner. "You may notice," says St. Bernard, "many living peacefully under a director, but if you

[1] 1 Tim. 3, 14 sq.

free them from the yoke, you shall see them unable to be peaceful and helpless against evil. Again you may find some who, as far as they are concerned, live in peace with all and really need no master, yet are by no means fit to direct others. For they are content with a certain good mediocrity, as God 'has divided the measure of grace'[2] to them. They know how to live sociably and peacefully among brethren, but when placed over them as superiors, they are not only useless, but imprudent and detrimental. There are others who know how to be superiors."[3] Hence Moses was instructed not to appoint anyone to govern the people, but "to provide out of all the people" experienced and "able men" to "judge the people at all times."[4] For one who is entrusted with an office, in order to be of benefit to others, must first learn the discipline of goodness by studiously exercising it himself and by frequent practice to form the

[2] Rom. 12, 3.
[3] *Serm. in Cant.*, XXIII, n. 8.
[4] Ex. 18, 21 sq.

habit of it. Hence we read that Our Lord first practised what He later taught by word. "Jesus began to do and to teach." [5]

2. Those who enter upon the duties of a superior need an instructor, in order that *they may learn* the *things of which they are ignorant,* namely, what is necessary and useful for their own salvation and spiritual advancement. In other words, what they ought to avoid and what they ought to know, to do, to hope, to fear, and to realise as the greater or less good or evil. "You have need to be taught again what are the first elements of the words of God." [6] *They should also be trained in the practise of virtue,* because it is not sufficient to know what is good, but the good must be actually practised, even as one who has finished a course in medicine, later on applies his science practically. For practice gives to the mind greater skill than mere knowledge of principles. And as those that are still deficient are usually slow in exercising themselves

[5] Acts 1, 1. [6] Heb. 5, 12.

in virtue, it is necessary that they be urged to it occasionally by others. Masters, therefore, are wont to exercise the disciples whom they desire to advance in perfection in diverse virtues,— now in humility, now in fraternal charity, now in self-control, now in devotion, now in patience, chastity, silence, obedience, etc., so that, practiced in this way, these virtues become habits, and the vices opposed to them are eradicated. For the more a virtue increases, the more the vice opposed to it decreases. "Bring them up," says St. Paul, "in the discipline and correction of the Lord." [7]

Those who enter upon the duties of a superior *must furthermore be watched,* lest they fall into sin or practice virtue with little discretion. For souls that are inexperienced, and not entirely free from inclination to sin, are more frequently restrained from sin through the fear of men than through the fear of God. Hence it is expedient for them to be subject to the direction of superiors, by whom they are withdrawn from danger, as little children

[7] Eph. 6, 4.

in danger of falling into the water, or threatened by wolves, are safeguarded by their mothers. "Counsel shall keep thee and prudence shall preserve thee, that thou mayest be delivered from the evil way and from the man that speaketh perverse things." [8]

They finally need a director to *correct them,* because evil ways always lead to something worse, just as a fever often is the cause of a more serious ailment, and a wound often produces an ulcer, unless the doctor's care prevents it. Thus also a person that commits a fault is not easily corrected unless he is sustained by the help of one who is stronger than himself. On this account God desires older persons to be superiors of the young, in order that if these fall into sin, or become negligent and imprudent, they may be corrected by admonition, correction, and punishment. For if they were left to themselves, they would either fail to realise their fault or wallow in the mire and sink deeper into it. Of such St. Jude says: "And some indeed reprove, being judged." [9]

[8] Prov. 2, 11 sq. [9] Jude 22.

Therefore it is necessary for them to be humbly subject to a master, because a patient cannot be cured of an ailment unless he obeys the directions of his physician. Evil passions are ailments in man. "He gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases." [10]

3. Those, however, who need no master for themselves, *ought to be so enlightened in knowledge* that they cannot err in those matters which they need to know, and cannot be deceived by men, nor by the evil spirit, nor by their own reason under the appearance of good, but are endowed with the gift of the discernment of spirits. Of them must be true what St. Paul says: "Everywhere and in all things I am instructed." [11]

They must also be *filled with the fervor of devotion,* so as to know, without the urging of another, how to apply themselves faithfully to the exercise of every virtue in the best manner possible. They should also be able to say: "Forgetting the things that are behind and

[10] Luke 9, 1. [11] Phil. 4, 12.

stretching forth myself to those that are before." [12]

They *should, besides, be so filled with the love of goodness* that they naturally detest every evil, as it were, diligently avoid scandal, and live peacefully and without offence to anyone, as the Apostle says: "Be without offence to the Jews and to the Gentiles." [13]

They should therefore *be so humble in all things* that they are neither elated over any good thing that they may possess, nor presume to be entirely free from evil, but accurately discern in themselves all disorders of thought, word, and omission, and correct them by strict self-discipline.

In all these things they are to be *so firmly grounded* that neither levity, nor distraction, nor difficulty, nor fear shall be able to change their attitude. "Who shall separate us from the charity of Christ." [14]

But as it is difficult to find such persons, few are fit to live without the yoke of obedience,

[12] Phil. 3, 13.
[13] 1 Cor. 10, 32.
[14] Rom. 8, 35.

and those who are placed as superiors over others, to act better and more intelligently, must in turn necessarily be subject to others, up to the Supreme Pontiff, who in turn rules the entire Church Militant as Vicar of Christ.

4. Therefore, those who are obliged to govern others must be endowed with various virtues. Some of these, which involve an irreproachable life, refer to *themselves;* others, *to their superiors,* by means of which they humbly obey those whom they are obliged to obey; others, *to subjects,* by means of which they govern them meritoriously and advance them in virtue. But though he who has the duty of teaching every virtue by authority of his office, ought to possess all virtues in an eminent degree, still, as six is the first perfect numeral of its kind consisting of several parts,[15] a good director of souls, especially a religious, must be distinguished among the rest by special virtues, as Isaias says: "The Seraphim [who are the most eminent choir of heavenly spirits] had

[15] Cfr. St. Bon., *Comm. in Sent.,* l. I, dist. 2, qu. 4.

six wings." [16] It was probably for this reason that the Lord appeared to our holy Father, St. Francis, under the likeness of a Seraph, when He marked him with the stigmata of His Passion, to show that those who would be superiors in his Order must be endowed with spiritual wings. So also, according to St. John in the Apocalypse, "the four living creatures had each of them six wings." [17]

[16] Is. 6, 2. [17] Apoc. 4, 8.

CHAPTER II

ZEAL FOR JUSTICE

1. The first wing of a director of souls is *zeal for justice,* by which he cannot bear to see any injustice done to himself or to others without interior protest. Every man is to be considered good in so far as he hates evil. The more a thing is cherished, the more is its destruction regretted. Hence it is to be observed that there are four kinds of persons who are commonly called good in a religious order and in the Church.

2. The first are those who, while they do no wrong, do not diligently exercise themselves in good works, *e.g.,* those who live in peace and tranquillity with others, giving neither offence nor scandal by bad deeds. Of such it is said: "These men were very good to us, and gave us no trouble." [1] We are accustomed to call

[1] 1 Kings 25, 15.

those good who are gentle in their ways and live sociably with all, even though they appear somewhat sluggish in the practise of virtue. Baptised children are considered good in the same sense.

3. The second kind are better. They do nothing wrong and frequently practise good works,— of self-denial, chastity, humility, charity, assiduous prayer, and similar things which they believe to be good. It is characteristic of this class of persons that, as they neglect naught of the things they understand and are able to do, they are content with whatever good they do, and are not incited to higher things or inspired with a more perfect desire for sanctity. They are satisfied with a certain amount of watching, praying, alms-giving, fasting and similar practices for God's sake, but leave the higher things to others. To them is applicable what Ecclesiastes says: "I have found that nothing is better than for a man to rejoice in his work, and that this is his portion." [2]

[2] Eccl. 3, 22.

4. The third class is even better than the former two. They that belong to it detest and avoid sin, and studiously perform the good that they are able to do, and when they have done all that they can, they think that they have done very little in comparison with what they would have liked to do, knowing that, as the Apostle says, "bodily exercise is profitable to little." [8] Consequently they aspire to virtues of the soul, sweetness of internal devotion, an intimate knowledge of God and the sensual perception of His Love, deeming themselves to be and to have nothing, nor receiving any consolation from temporal and spiritual things, as long as they are not enjoying, according to their wish and desire, the pleasure of devotion and that arising from the above-mentioned practice of virtues. They are, however, not kindled with fervent zeal against evil habits and against the danger of others falling into sin. They desire that all men should be good and happy, but when they find the contrary to be the case, they experience no pain but are

[8] 1 Tim. 4, 8.

content with themselves and God. Such persons, if called to rule over others, are less fit for this purpose, because they give more consideration to their own comfort than to the care of their subjects, like the figtree in the parable, which said: "Can I leave my sweetness and my delicious fruits, and go to be promoted among the other trees?" [4]

5. The fourth class are the best. They, like the former, are aflame with zeal for justice, innocence, and virtue, and the salvation of souls. They obtain no consolation from their own advancement unless they can draw others with them to God, after the example of our Lord, who, though He possessed in Himself the fulness of everlasting beatitude, was not content with having glory for Himself, but went out and, by assuming the form of a servant, drew many after Him by deed and word. The zeal of justice, like the "scarlet twice dyed," [5] glitters with the two-fold color of

[4] Judges 9, 11.

[5] Ex. 31, 36 *et alibi.* Cfr. St. Gregory, *Reg. Past.*, P. II, c. 3.

charity, love of God and of neighbor. Love of God not only inspires a desire to enjoy His sweetness and cling to Him, but delights in doing His holy will, increasing His worship, and exalting His honor, for it desires to see Him acknowledged, loved, served, and glorified above all things by every one. Love of neighbor desires not only the corporal well-being and temporal prosperity of others, but far more their eternal salvation. Wherever, therefore, charity is more perfect, the desire to promote these things is more fervent, the endeavor more energetic, the joy purer, when it sees them accomplished. For charity "seeketh not her own,"[6] but the things that are God's. In proportion to the ardor with which you love God, and the purity with which you desire the things that are God's, you grieve over the offences committed against Him, when you see that He is not acknowledged, but dishonored; when you see that He is not loved and obeyed, that His worship is subverted and His enemies are multiplied and rejoice. And

[6] 1 Cor. 13, 5.

according to the depth of your love for the salvation of your neighbor you will grieve over his ruin and the obstacles laid in his way toward heaven.

6. Though charity is required of all the friends of God, it is required above all of His representatives, who, according to His will, should be governed by love of justice and hatred of iniquity. "Thou hast loved justice," says the Psalmist, "and hated iniquity." [7] By justice is here meant the observance of all those things that are necessary for the salvation or perfection of souls.

7. Some of these things have their foundation in *the eternal law,* such as the pure virtues: humility, chastity, charity, mercy, and the like, without which no one can be saved. To these the commandments of God in the old and in the new law are mainly directed. For, as our Lord says, upon the law of God and neighbor "dependeth the whole law and the prophets." [8] Others are *of human institution,* prescribed by an authority that acts in the name of

[7] Ps. 44, 8. [8] Matth. 22, 40.

God. Such are the laws that have been laid down by the Church for the general welfare, the rites for the administration of the Sacraments, and other regulations of positive law. "The canons are to be observed by every one," [9] in such a manner that each one shall observe what pertains to his state and what is prescribed for all, laymen as well as clerics.

Others *proceed from a vow,* as the things which no one is compelled to do, but which a man of his own free will has promised and is obliged to keep as it were by divine command. Such are, for instance, the chastity and obedience of the religious state, the abdication of property in monasteries, and the special obligations imposed by the rule of each order upon its members. "When thou hast made a vow to the Lord, thy God, thou shalt not delay to pay it; because the Lord thy God will require it. And if thou delay, it shall be imputed to thee for a sin. If thou wilt not promise, thou shalt be without sin. But that

[9] X. de Constit., l. 9, tit. 2: "*Canonum statuta custodiantur ab omnibus.*"

which is once gone out of thy lips, thou shalt observe and shalt do as thou hast promised to the Lord, thy God, and hast spoken with thy own will and thy own mouth." [10]

Still others proceed from *certain practices of spiritual progress,* which are not otherwise necessary for salvation, such as the discipline of the Divine Office, the individual duties in an order, the order of duties, the time of observing silence, the use of food and raiment, the order of time and work, vigils and other spiritual practices, which differ in the various religious orders according to what seems most expedient for each. Though in regard to these things there exists no such strict obligation as if salvation were impossible without them, yet disregard of them mars the beauty of religious life and usually prevents spiritual progress and the edification of others. For just as the love of justice zealously promotes those things in oneself and in others, so on the other hand it grieves and is consumed and incensed when they are disregarded. "Have I

[10] Deut. 23, 21–23.

not," says the Psalmist, "hated them, O Lord, that hated Thee; and pined away because of Thy enemies." [11]

8. A person imbued with zeal for justice has a certain innate delicacy of feeling, which teaches him to deplore grave transgressions more seriously than minor ones. A thoughtful person considers things as they are, either good or bad, but a fool either regards great things as trifles or trifles as great things, and takes the mote in his brother's eye for a beam, "straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel." [12] "You tithe mint and rue and every herb and pass over judgment and the charity of God," says Christ.[13] Such persons are carried away by selfishness and are not guided by the Spirit of God, like unto those who punish a person more severely for a neglected inclination in choir than for repeated detractions of another religious, or grow more indignant over the neglect of a versicle or some minute prescription of the rubrics than

[11] Ps. 138, 21.
[12] Matth. 7, 3; 23, 24.
[13] Luke 11, 42.

over a serious quarrel accompanied by scandal.

9. First and above all, therefore, *transgressions of the commandments of God* must be prevented and deplored; then transgressions of the inviolable precepts of holy Church; after this the non-observance of those things to which a person has bound himself by a voluntary promise, as, for instance, the regular observance of a rule, especially that which is prescribed as a matter of precept; finally, all habits having a species of malice, namely, avarice, pride, envy, gluttony, anger, suspicious familiarity, disobedience, and similar vices, through which the reputation of religious, whereby the rest of the faithful ought to be edified and learn what to avoid and what to do, loses its sweet odor, so that the faithful are scandalised by their vices rather than refreshed by the example of their virtues. St. Paul had such in mind when he said: "The name of God is blasphemed through you among the Gentiles." [14] A serious secret sin is more easily corrected than such an evil habit,

[14] Rom. 2, 24.

because the former can be cured by secret penance, whereas an evil habit is scarcely ever eradicated from the hearts of those whom it controls.

10. In the fifth place, the *zealous practice of prayer must be encouraged.* It enlivens the true religious spirit and incites to the practice of every virtue. A religious congregation that is not fed with this oil runs dry. The structure of good works is unstable if it is not sustained by frequent and devout prayer as a stone wall is sustained by cement. In every religious order in which the fervor of devotion has decreased, the structure of the other virtues begins to weaken and is in danger of ruin. "The lamps of the foolish went out." [15]

11. Finally there is to be mentioned the *neglect* of *external discipline,* which has been established as an ornament of the religious life and an incentive to spiritual progress. To disregard it is a sign of carelessness and interior levity. Compliance with discipline is not prescribed in such a way that one is not

[15] Matth. 25, 8.

allowed to live differently, but for the reason that it is more conducive to conformity of virtue and uniformity of life, lest any one live and act as he likes and thus prove a cause of disturbance to others. In regard to such customs and practices, which are in themselves indifferent, but prescribed, as has been said,[16] for other reasons, greater care should be given to their being well observed than to scrupulous anxiety lest by some slight indulgence they be neglected, unless, indeed, their habitual disregard would engender a bad habit and dissimulation nourish neglect; in which case, to prevent other evils, the zeal of discipline must not relent.

12. A superior who is imbued with a true zeal for justice, therefore, will first of all take care not to *do* or *teach* anything wrong; secondly *not to allow* or *permit himself* to be moved by importunity or deception; thirdly, *not to favor* or *prefer* to see anything done without being asked, or in his absence; fourthly, *never to dissemble* or *be silent,* as if

[16] *Supra,* n. 7.

he had no knowledge of things, whereas it is his duty to admonish and teach how bad certain things are, and to deter others from presuming to attempt them in future; fifthly, *not to permit faults to go unpunished,* because the punishment of a transgression always produces some good, namely, by deterring the one who is guilty from sinning again. "Sin no more," said Christ, "lest some worse thing happen to thee." [17] Furthermore, faults should not be permitted to go unpunished, in order that the erring brother may be cleansed from his sin and not be punished more severely by God later on, for, says Proverbs, "Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and deliver his soul from hell." [18] Also for the reason that by this means others may be taught to beware lest they fall into similar faults. "The wicked man being scourged, the fool shall be wiser," [19] that is to say, the weak and the beginner learn to be cautious. Finally, the Superior, who takes the place of the Supreme Judge, saves his own

[17] John 5, 14.
[18] Prov. 23, 14.
[19] Prov. 19, 25.

soul from the sin of neglect by fulfilling his duty. Heli, the high priest, because he failed to do this, heard his own sentence of death and also that of his sons.[20]

13. Dutiful religious differ from careless ones not in this that among the former none is found without sin, but that none is suffered to sin unpunished, and they are studiously protected from the danger of sinning, kept away from the incorrigible, and are cherished and loved, that they may persevere and advance continuously on the way to perfection. Since depravity was found among the choirs of the holy Angels before their confirmation in grace, and among the Apostles under the direction of Christ, what order of virtuous persons on earth may dare to claim for itself that there is no sin in its members? Though many are free from sin by the grace of God, yet not all. "You are clean, but not all." [21]

14. It is well for the good, while they are still in a position to acquire supernatural merits, to have among them some wicked per-

[20] 1 Kings 4, 11 sq. [21] John 13, 10.

sons who may be for them the occasion of greater merit. They may have compassion on them in their wickedness. Their zeal may be inflamed. They may exert themselves in correcting the erring. They may be filled with fear of becoming like them. The wicked may become a source of temptations to the good. The good may have to suffer persecution from the wicked. They may be confounded and humbled in considering the evil ways of the bad, because they are not like them, and prompted to render thanks to Him who has protected them from becoming like the wicked. If no opportunity were offered to the good to practice the above mentioned virtues, their merits would by that much be curtailed. "What things a man shall sow," says St. Paul, "these also shall he reap." [22]

15. Badly disposed religious, however, are to be neither cherished nor favored, but may be tolerated, especially those whose faults are secret and do not contaminate others, and for whom there is hope of amendment.

[22] Gal. 6, 8.

Where these things are lacking, bad religious cannot be tolerated without serious detriment, and hence should be expelled, in order that their wickedness may not appear to be agreeable to those who are good. During the time that they are tolerated, they are to be punished with the rod of admonitions, corrections, humiliations, and penances; and soothed with the balm of exhortations, consolations, prayers, and promises, if they recover from their faults and become strong. The way of sin and temptation must be closed to them. This is also beneficial for good religious, lest the occasion of sin corrupt them.

If a superior, who takes the place of God, "whom his Lord setteth over his family," [23] and to whom for this reason subjects owe the same obedience as to the Lord Himself, fails to correct delinquents, permits the growth of bad habits and the introduction of evil practices, and allows those that have crept in to increase and spread; if he sees that the regular observances are neglected and transgres-

[23] Luke 12, 24.

sions multiply, and yet neglects to stop the existing or impending evils to the best of his ability, he shall be responsible to God for three things.

16. First of all he shall have to render an account to God for *his negligence* in omitting to do that to which his office obliged him. "Because being ministers of his kingdom, you have not judged rightly, nor kept the law of justice, nor walked according to the will of God. Horribly and speedily will he appear to you: for a most severe judgement shall be for them that bear rule." [24]

Secondly, *all the sins of his subjects,* which he could and ought to have corrected, *are imputed to him.* "If thou dost not speak to warn the wicked man from his ways, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but I shall require his blood at thy hand." [25]

In the third place, he shall be responsible for the *abuse of the dignity and power that was given to him,* having turned it to his own honor and pleasure and not to the purpose for

[24] Wis. 6, 5. [25] Ezech. 33, 8.

which it was conferred upon him. "Take ye away . . . the talent from him . . . and the unprofitable servant cast ye out into the exterior darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." [26]

17. A superior who is imbued with the right kind of zeal should show how much he loves God by promoting in himself and in others what pleases Him. He should not falter in his zeal through sloth, nor tire in his exertions, nor be deflected by counsels, nor fooled by cunning, nor carried away by friendship and flattery, nor terrified by threats, nor become discouraged on account of long standing abuses, but should fulfill his duty.

[26] Matt. 25, 28, 30.

CHAPTER III

PITY

1. The second "wing" of the ecclesiastical superior is pity or fraternal compassion. As the love of God inflames him with zeal for justice, so fraternal love should imbue him with affection. For if the rod should be held over evil-doers, the staff is required for the support of the weak. "Thy rod and thy staff, they have comforted me."[1] St. Paul says: "Shall I come to you with a rod; or in charity, and in the spirit of meekness?"[2] Thus also the *Samaritan* poured into the wounds of the half dead wanderer the wine of fervent zeal and the oil of compassion.[3]

2. There are two kinds of infirmities that need to be treated with compassion,— the one corporal, the other spiritual. Corporal infirm-

[1] Ps. 22, 4.
[2] 1 Cor. 4, 31.
[3] Luke 10, 33 sq.

ity is threefold. There are first the sick who are forced to remain in bed on account of an acute or serious disease. There are, secondly, those who, though confined to their cells, are able to be up and about now and then and sometimes even venture out, yet are subject to frequent and severe attacks of painful ailments, such as gallstones, ulcers, obesity, and the like. A third kind of sick are those that have no specific ailment, but are weak and exhausted, as, for instance, the aged and those who have been over-worked or are depressed by natural weakness and momentarily worn out by accidental languor.

These classes of patients must be severally treated in a threefold way, namely, with drugs, if it can be properly done, or relaxation of rigor in food, raiment, hours of sleep, etc., exemption from work in the shops, from services, from attending choir and the like, according as their needs may require. Each of these remedies is to be applied to the sick according to their condition, as indicated above, so that they may find relief.

3. Pity and compassion must be shown to the sick and ailing because they are afflicted by the Lord. If they are molested because of their condition their very misfortune will cry out to the Father of mercies against their tormentors. "They have persecuted him whom thou hast smitten; and they have added to the grief of my wounds." [4] For a sick man is harassed in his affliction a great deal more when those who are in duty bound to do so, fail to comfort him, to relieve him from work, to supply his wants, and have no pity for him. "In thy sight," says the Psalmist, "are all they that afflict me; I looked for one that would grieve together with me, but there was none; and for one that would comfort me, and I found none. And they gave me gall [reproach] for my food, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar [censure] to drink. Let their table become as a snare before them, and a recompense and a stumbling block." [5]

4. A good superior realizes that he is the father and not the task-master of his brethren,

[4] Ps. 68, 27. [5] Ps. 68, 21, 23.

and acts like a physician, not like a tyrant. He does not consider his subjects as beasts of burden or slaves, but as children, who are destined to partake of the eternal inheritance, and does unto them "as he would have it done unto himself," [6] if he were in a similar position. The strong and healthy do not suffer as a sick person does, and hence have no compassion with the sick. But they will know it later on when they themselves suffer affliction. They object that sick persons often imagine themselves to be weaker than they really are. Are all, then, to be considered hypocrites for this reason? Should they not on the contrary recall that the Lord was willing to spare many wicked men for the sake of a few who were just? [7]

5. The sick stand in greater need of assistance and compassion than the hale and strong, for three reasons. First, on account of the necessity of *sustaining life,* which they cannot do for themselves. If the necessaries of life are not procured for them by others, they be-

[6] Tobias 4, 16. [7] Gen. 18, 23.

come enfeebled and cannot endure. "He that is cast off should not altogether perish." [8] Secondly, on account of the necessity of *restoring health and strength,* which they have lost by sickness. If even a strong and healthy person needs assistance in order to sustain his health, one who is sick and weak needs a twofold relief in order not to lose the strength he still has, and to recover that which he has lost. For, says the Lord: "From him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away." [9] Thirdly, on *account* of the *relief* which *consolation* brings. For those who are much afflicted it is a solace to see others having compassion upon them and faithfully assisting them in the endeavor to recover their health. "Blessed be ye of the Lord, for you have pitied my case." [10]

6. But, says some one, those for whom there is hope of recovery are indeed worthy of assistance, but it is a useless waste to assist those who are hopelessly ill. This would be correct

[8] 2 Kings 14, 14.
[9] Luke 19, 26.
[10] 1 Kings 23, 31.

if consideration were asked for the sick not for the sake of charity, but for reasons of worldly utility. But he who comes to the relief of an invalid for the sake of receiving a return for the favor, deprives himself of the merit of charity. The greater the misery, the brighter is mercy and the purer is charity. It is, therefore, well for a superior occasionally to suffer himself, so that he may learn to have compassion on his subjects. "We have not a high priest, who cannot have compassion on our infirmities: but one tempted in all things like as we are, without sin." [11]

7. Spiritual infirmities are also threefold. The first class of sufferers comprises those who, because of lack of devotion or under the influence of temptations, are prone to commit faults and incur imperfections, are easily led astray by temptations, and apt to fall into sin. "There are many infirm and weak among you, and many sleep." [12]

In the second class are those who, though devout and well disposed, become discouraged

[11] Heb. 4, 15. [12] 1 Cor. 11, 30.

by a slight correction or a severe reprimand, or fall a prey to a kind of diffidence akin to despair, or give way to great impatience and excitement, which causes them to grieve afterwards and sometimes to annoy others. Of such St. Paul says: "We that are stronger, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak." [13]

To the third class belong all imperfect religious, who waver in the pursuit of virtue, and, through the impulse of the passions, feel themselves intermittently, even though reluctantly, urged to turn to irritation, anger, sloth, lust, intemperance, and other carnal as well as spiritual vices. They may cry in the words of the Psalmist: "Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak: heal me, for my bones are troubled." [14]

8. The remedies to be applied to these infirmities are: to *remove the occasion of the scandal* and the opportunity of sinning, in order that they may not see or hear anything that would cause them to grow infirm, and hence they should not be permitted to roam

[13] Rom. 15, 1. [14] Ps. 6, 3.

about outside the house. Dina was ravished when she left her house.[15] Through *frequent exhortations they should be strengthened in the practice of patience*, and should be spared severe reproaches and other measures that would tend to excite them until they have recovered from their frailty. St. Paul says: "Fathers, provoke not your children to indignation, lest they be discouraged."[16] He who nags an excited person, so to speak, provokes a barking dog to bite him.— Their *idiosyncracies and imperfections should be borne with equanimity.* "All things cannot be in men."[17]

9. As doctors, in treating rude and inexperienced persons, are wont to disregard their ignorance, because they are simple, so virtuous persons kindly bear with the faults of others, knowing that all cannot be equally perfect, and hence do not impose upon those who are like tender children in Christ heavier burdens than they are able to carry, or expect of them

[15] Gen. 34, 1, 2.
[16] Col. 3, 21.
[17] Ecclesiast. 17, 29.

anything that exceeds their strength. In reference to this the words of Jacob are appropriate: "Thou knowest that I have with me tender children and sheep, and kine with young, which if I cause to be overdriven, in one day all the flock will die." [18] In other words, he who drives those who are like children and have a certain measure of good will, resembling a fruit in the womb, as it were, in an effort to make them practice virtue above their strength, destroys in them what, with the help of grace, they have already acquired. "We became little ones," says St. Paul, "in the midst of you, as if a nurse should cherish her children." [19] He means, I have humored you humbly and gently, out of consideration for your sensitiveness and inexperience. On the other hand, the Lord, through the Prophet Ezechiel, chides harsh and unfeeling shepherds: "The weak you have not strengthened, and that which was sick you have not healed, that which was broken you have not bound up, . . . neither have you sought that which was lost;

[18] Gen. 33, 13. [19] 1 Thess. 2, 7.

but you have ruled over them with rigor and with a high hand." [20] St. Bernard says: "Learn to be towards your subjects like mothers, and not like masters; strive to be loved rather than feared; and if severity is sometimes necessary, let it be paternal and not tyrannical. Show yourselves as mothers in loving, as fathers in chastising. Be gentle, avoid harshness; hang up the rod, and give the breasts. A mother's breasts should bulge with milk, not swell with fever. Why do you load your subjects down with your burdens when you ought to be bearing theirs?" [21] "Carry them in your bosom," says the Lord to Moses, "as the nurse is wont to carry the little infant, and bear them into the land, for which thou hast sworn to their fathers." [22]

[20] Ezech. 34, 4.
[21] *Serm in Cant.*, XXIII, n. 2.
[22] Numb. 11, 12.

CHAPTER IV

PATIENCE

1. The third wing of the ecclesiastical Seraph is patience and forbearance. As the roof of a house or tent catches the dust, rain, and wind, so that the interior may remain clean and neat, so superiors who faithfully defend their subjects against the tempests of sin must often vicariously bear the brunt of adversities, even as the hen hurls herself against the hawk in defense of her chicks.

2. Now there are three things above all others in regard to which patience seems to be necessary to a superior. First, on account of his manifold *duties, cares,* and *occupations.* He has to watch over the spiritual discipline as well as to provide for corporeal needs, as the Apostles were solicitous not only for the spiritual, but also for the temporal necessities

of the faithful, especially the poor. "James and Cephas and John," says St. Paul, "gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship: that we should go into the Gentiles, and they unto the circumcision," *i. e.,* to preach the gospel, "only that we should be mindful of the poor; which same thing also I was careful to do." [1] Our Lord fed the multitudes whom he had refreshed with the words of salvation, and also with material bread, when they had no food.[2] There are also *various occupations,* arising out of domestic cares as well as from external causes, in which a superior is occasionally involved and which are apt to fill him with anxiety. Besides these there arise a multitude of *labors,* such as delivering discourses, holding vigils, attending to business affairs, and other trying duties which require patience. Moses, who was the mildest of men and privileged to hold intimate intercourse with God, divided the burden of governing the chosen people because he was unable to carry so many responsibilities alone. "I alone," he said,

[1] Gal. 2, 9 sq. [2] Mark 5, 35–44.

"am not able to bear your business, and the charge of you and your differences. Let us have from among you wise and understanding men, and such whose conversation is approved among your tribes that I may appoint them your rulers." [3]

3. In the second place a superior needs patience because of the *slow progress* of those in whom this virtue is feeble. He sees how few of his subjects advance, how that which, after great exertions and many efforts on his part, had begun to show a little improvement, is easily subverted, and how, on account of the many difficulties and obstacles impeding spiritual progress, his labors seem to be fruitless, just as when one has sown much seed and sees only a few plants growing. Sometimes he observes that what he has personally commanded and ordered, is carried out in a careless manner, and that evil creeps in under the cloak of good, so that he dares not openly to repress it, since it appears good outwardly, and still in the end a greater good is frustrated and the

[3] Deut. 1, 12, 13.

door opened for manifest abuses, as in the case when, to save more souls, more members have been received than can be conveniently kept. This increase of membership will in the end be detrimental to poverty, because some wish to enjoy and not to be deprived of many things, and consequently frequent excursions are made to obtain the things that are necessary, unusual methods are chosen to obtain them, acts against the rule are committed in receiving them, devotion is disturbed, religious customs fall into desuetude, the brethren become accustomed to go out at will and seek various comforts of the body, contract familiarities forbidden by the rule, and ask their penitents for presents, make the edification of souls secondary to other advantages, flatter the rich, increase the order's landed possessions, raise sumptuous palaces, fail to correct scandals, and God's honor, which is to be advanced by the sanctity of our lives and by the edification of others resulting therefrom, is spurned.

The same must be said of the premature promotion of young men and of those who lack

experience to the offices of confessors, preachers, and superiors. It also applies to many things which glitter in the eyes of men, but interiorly, in the eyes of God, dim the pure light of religion. Those who are inexperienced in the religious life, and have no taste for spiritual things, are apt to imagine that the whole strength of the spiritual life consists in this external respectability, and therefore defend the latter with great zeal, having no regard for true virtue. A religious superior who sees these and many other disorders, and judges everything in the light of truth, is grieved and troubled, and not daring to correct the abuses as he would desire, is trained wonderfully in the virtue of patience. "My zeal has made me pine away." [4] "The zeal of thy house has eaten me up." [5]

4. In the third place patience is necessary for a superior on account of the *ingratitude* of those for whom he labors with so much anxiety. He scarcely ever satisfies them, and they generally *complain* that he could act dif-

[4] Ps. 118, 139. [5] Ps. 68, 10.

ferently or do better if he wished, so that often he is in doubt whether he ought to make concessions and do what they desire, or stand firmly for what he believes to be more expedient. He may say with St. Paul: "I am straitened between two: having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ, a thing by far better." [6] A superior must also practice patience, when his subjects judge rashly the things that he does and put an evil construction upon them, criticise him, murmur and complain against him, defame him, and take scandal when he thinks he is serving God and them, so that he is scarcely able to escape the difficulties arising from whatever he ordains or undertakes because it displeases them and disturbs others. Patience is still more necessary for a superior when some of his inferiors directly oppose or attack him, or cunningly prevent him from doing his duty.

5. The superior should seek to protect himself against these and other difficulties which beset him, by the triple armor of patience: first

[6] Phil. 1, 23.

let him reply to each one *with gentleness, deliberation,* and *kindness,* and repress the inclination to impetuosity, in order that he may not by voice, feature, or conduct, betray impatience. He will achieve more by patience and finally conquer those whom he would provoke still more by impetuosity. Thus Gideon, by his gentle answer to the men of Ephraim, who sought a quarrel with him, appeased their anger.[7] "A mild answer," says Scripture, "breaketh wrath, but a harsh word stirreth up fury."[8] Excitement is scarcely ever quelled by excitement, and a vice is not cured by a vice.

Impatience in a superior causes confusion in the attainment of the good which he could promote. It scandalizes others, for as Proverbs says, "he that is impatient, exalteth his folly."[9] It renders him contemptible in the eyes of his subjects and of others. "He that is vain and foolish, shall be exposed to contempt."[10] It makes him feared and disliked. "A man full

[7] Judges 8, 1–3.
[8] Prov. 15, 18.
[9] *Ib.*, 14, 29.
[10] *Ib.*, 12, 8.

of tongue is terrible in his city, and he that is rash in his word shall be hateful." [11] It provokes others to impatience. "A passionate man stirreth up strifes; he that is patient appeaseth those that are stirred up." [12] His subjects dare not inform him of their needs. "If we begin to speak to thee, perhaps thou wilt take it ill." [13] It fills the house with murmurings and complaints. "He that troubleth his own house, shall inherit the winds." [14] It repels timid characters and engenders cowardice. "A spirit that is easily angered, who can bear?" [15] No one dares to correct such a superior in matters that ought to be corrected. "He is a son of Belial, so that no man can speak to him." [16]

6. A superior shall, in the second place, cultivate *calmness*. He should neither seek revenge for injuries done to him, nor hate those that have done them, nor be less attentive to their wants, nor seek to have them removed.

[11] Eccl. 9, 25.
[12] Prov. 15, 18.
[13] Job 4, 2.
[14] Prov. 11, 29.
[15] *Ib.*, 18, 14.
[16] 1 Kings 25, 17.

But he should rather show greater attachment to such persons, so that by this means he may edify them and others by doing good to them and, after the example of the Good Shepherd, exercise himself in virtue. "You shall be the sons of the Highest," says our Lord, "for he is kind to the ungrateful and to the evil." [17] Since to instruct in virtue is a duty of the superior, shall he teach his vicious subjects by having them removed? Can the physician effect a cure by shunning his patients? Can a youthful athlete gain renown by refusing to meet his competitors? Can a merchant become rich if he neglects the chances of securing a great profit? This is the reason why so many bishops and prelates have become sanctified above others because they attained the height of perfection through the opportunities which their position offered them, by doing good as well as patiently bearing adversities and edifying others. It is for this reason St. Paul says: "If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." [18]

[17] Luke 6, 23. [18] 1 Tim. 3, 1.

7. A superior shall, thirdly, *exercise forbearance.* Himself willing and eager to do what his office requires of him, he shall bear with the fatigue, the tardiness, and the importunities of his subjects, because thus he will acquire higher merits. "Do you therefore take courage, and let not your hands be weakened; for there shall be a reward for your work."[19] The "hands" of a superior are eagerness in doing good and patience in bearing burdens. If these are not weakened by idleness or want of forbearance, he will reap an eternal reward.

8. For by these adversities a superior is *cleansed from the stain of sin* which he contracts through human frailty. "In many things we all offend," says St. James,[20] and superiors are often guilty of negligence for which they need to be cleansed in this life, in order that they may not be punished in the next. "If he commit any iniquity," says the Lord, "I will correct him with the rod of men,

[19] 2 Paral. 15, 7.
[20] Jas. 3, 2.

and with the stripes of the children of men." [21]

9. Weighed down by these faults, a superior is *guarded against the evil of pride,* which ensnares especially those who have power over others. The sublimity of his position, the freedom from restraint which it confers, and complaisance in good works, easily puff him up, unless the weight of adversity humbles his presumption and thus preserves him from pride. "He openeth the ears of men," says Job, "and teaching, instructeth them in what they are to learn. That he may withdraw a man from the things he is doing, and may deliver him from pride, rescuing his soul from corruption, and his life from passing to the sword. He rebuketh also sorrow in the bed, and he maketh all his bones to wither." [22]

For a good superior the humiliation of adversity is a sure means of salvation and progress, without which success will raise a storm of presumption. David, who was a man according to the heart of God, was most devoted

[21] 2 Kings 7, 14. [22] Job 33, 16–19.

and humble when steeped in adversity, but fell into sin when he became elated with his successes. "It is good for me that thou hast humbled me, that I may learn thy justifications." [23]

10. The *merits of a superior,* as was indicated above, *are increased* by the fact that he acquires glory from the good which he promotes in himself and others, and is magnificently rewarded for the hardships which he endures, as the gold that is cleansed by fire becomes purer and more refined. "As gold in the furnace he hath proved them, and as a victim of a holocaust he hath received them." [24] Frequently, however, spiritual perfection increases imperceptibly and is strengthened when seemingly weakened. "So is the kingdom of God," says Jesus, "as if a man should cast seed into the earth, and should sleep and rise, night and day, and the seed should spring, and grow up whilst he knoweth not." [25]

But it would not be surprising if the exer-

[23] Ps. 118, 71.
[24] Wisd. 3, 6.
[25] Mark 4, 26 sq.

tions of a superior did not succeed in all things, since the work of God in men does not always redound to their salvation, and while "many are called, but few are chosen." [26] Not all the seed that is sown grows, and those who dig for treasures willingly throw up tons of earth to find a little gold and silver. The perfection of a good superior is as great as would be the loss were he not a superior, just as light is good in so far as its absence is an evil. A superior ought to be encouraged to bear his burden by the thought that he merits reward no less on account of those who fail or advance but little, than on account of those who make the greatest progress. For the Apostle does not say that every one shall receive his own reward according to his perfection, but "according to his labor." [27] It belongs to God "to give the increase." [28] A teacher labors harder with a fractious than with a docile pupil, and a fair judge will reward him more therefor. A farmer labors harder in a sterile and stony

[26] Matt. 22, 14.
[27] 1 Cor. 3, 8.
[28] *Ib.* 3, 7.

field, and though the harvest be smaller, the reward is greater, because what is obtained with greater difficulty often sells at a higher price.

CHAPTER V

EDIFICATION

1. The fourth wing of a religious superior is an *exemplary life* or *edification.* A superior ought to be a model for his subjects and teach by example as well as words, just as one who teaches geometry exhibits his demonstrations by figures, to make himself more easily understood. It is said of Jesus in the Acts of the Apostles that He "began to do and to teach," [1] and in St. John's Gospel He says of Himself: "I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also." [2] Gideon in the Book of Judges says: "What you shall see me do, do you the same." [3] Although a superior ought to excel his subjects not only in the virtues described, but also in all others, he should particularly set them an example in

[1] Acts 1, 1.
[2] John 13, 15.
[3] Judges 7, 17.

the following three things: in *the community exercises,* in *gentleness and humility,* and in *uprightness and sincerity.* "In all things," St. Paul exhorts his disciple Titus, "show thyself an example of good works, in doctrine, in integrity, in gravity." [4]

2. A superior *should conform himself* with his subjects in food, dress, and work, and not indulge in banquets and drinking bouts while the others use coarse food and drink. Nor should he dress differently from those with whom he stands on the same footing as regards profession, nor, while arranging or ordering their occupations, dispense himself from working with his subjects. A shepherd who keeps aloof from his sheep exposes them to the wolves. Let him be strong for the strong and weak for the weak, as St. Paul suggests: "To the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak. I became all things to all men that I might save all." [5] If a *healthy* superior lives like a weakling, he makes his subjects effeminate by his example; if he is *sick* and *re-*

[4] Tit. 2, 7. [5] 1 Cor. 9, 22.

fuses to take *medicine,* he makes them pusillanimous by insinuating that he either wishes them to do as he does, or does not desire them to be cured. A soldier fights more cheerfully when he sees his general sharing the hardships of the campaign. "All the time that the Lord Jesus came in and went out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, until the day wherein He was taken up from us," [6] that is to say, from the time He began to have disciples until He ascended up to His Father, He always taught by His example, coming in, living on familiar terms with His disciples, and going out, by associating with the multitude, as was proper.

3. The superior should also be *humble in his bearing,* show by his conduct that he has no high opinion of himself, and does not affect the superiorship, but is fearful and would rather prefer the condition of a subject, convinced that those over whom he is placed are better than he and deeming himself more worthy to be their servant than their master. Thus he

[6] Acts 1, 21, 22.

shall live up to the admonition of our Lord: "He that is greater among you, let him become as the younger; and he that is the leader, as he that serveth. But I am in the midst of you as he that serveth." [7] "Have they made thee ruler? be not lifted up; be among them as one of them." [8]

4. A superior should, furthermore, be *affable,* so that his subjects have easy access to him and can speak with him with confidence of their needs. He should listen to them patiently, kindly give them satisfaction, earnestly instruct and cheerfully exhort them. He should seek to be loved rather than feared, for men more willingly obey one who is loved than one who is feared. Loving obedience is in the proper sense voluntary, whereas obedience based upon fear is forced. But the more voluntary obedience is, the sublimer its merits. The purpose of the superior's office is to guide those committed to his care to eternal life and faithfully to lead them to merits of virtue.

5. A superior should *be modest in the use*

[7] Luke 22, 26, 27. [8] Eccl. 33, 1.

of temporal things. He should neither practise nor love ostentation, but whatever he has should show forth voluntary poverty and humility, as, for instance, his garments, books, cell, bed, utensils, table, and similar things, so that nothing may have the appearance of vanity and singularity; nor shall he tolerate them in the rest. Like attracts like; a proud heart loves novel, an humble heart lowly, things. The sign of an humble heart is to seek neither dainty, nor love precious, nor desire costly things. Job says: "He beholdeth every high thing, he is king over all the children of pride." [9]

6. *Honesty* and *sincerity* shows itself in three ways. First of all a superior should *not be frivolous,* or use vulgar and irreligious language, which, though it may occasionally be considered amusing, savors of disrespect. "If a preacher is frivolous in his ways," says Saint Gregory, "his preaching will repel others." [10] Though a superior is rather to be

[9] Job 41, 25.
[10] *Hom in Ezech.,* l. 3, n. 4.

loved, yet by the insolent he ought to be feared. Love itself is sweeter, as it were, when mixed with respect. This is evident in our Creator, the sweetness of whose dignity is felt more deliciously the more exalted His Majesty is found to be. Hence the Psalmist says: "The Lord is sweet and righteous; therefore, He will give a law to sinners in the way." [11]

7. A good superior should *not bestow his affections lightly on women or persons conspicuous for levity.* For, although the more virtuous are to be treated with greater affection than those who are less virtuous, and all with consideration for the sake of the hope of eternal salvation in Christ, still in his external bearing the superior should act towards everyone so that he may not be suspected of despising one for the sake of others, but that each may think himself loved by him and confide in him as in a true friend. Thus he shall avoid the evil appearance of entertaining displeasure towards some and malice towards others, as it was with the brothers of Joseph,

[11] Ps. 24, 8.

who hated him because he was a favorite of their father.

8. A good superior should *not be fickle in his counsels,* so that what pleases him today displeases him tomorrow, wishing now this and now that, though there is no reason for the change. Who shall trust his judgment or conform to his will when he is shaky in either? His subjects can neither respect his prudence nor know how to render obedience to him. In either case great harm is apt to follow. He should bear in mind the words of St. Paul: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good," [12] and, "Do ye all things without murmurings and hesitations." [13] But where there is good reason for acting differently in different circumstances, such as real necessity or religious utility, he is not frivolous but correct and sincere in his conduct, for, as it is folly to exchange the better for the worse, so is it foolish to cling obstinately to one's ideas and not know when to sacrifice them for a greater and more evident good. "Neither must you

[12] 1 Thess. 5, 21. [13] Phil. 2, 14.

think," said the great king Artaxerxes, "if we command different things, that it cometh of levity of mind, but that we give sentence according to the quality and necessity of the times, as the profit of the commonwealth requireth." [14] The Apostle, excusing himself for having promised the Corinthians a visit, says that he had not given this promise thoughtlessly but for their own benefit: "I have had a mind to come to you before, that you might have a second grace." [15] In Ecclesiasticus it is said: "As a judge of the people is himself, so also are his ministers: And what manner of men the ruler of a city is, such also are they that dwell therein." [16]

9. Good teachers usually have good scholars. In religious orders, and in the Church generally, many would become better if examples of virtuous life were given them by their instructors. Culpable negligence in this matter shall be severely punished, for God says through the prophet Ezechiel: "Behold, I

[14] Esther 19, 9.
[15] 2 Cor. 1, 15.
[16] Ecclus. 10, 2.

myself came upon the shepherds; I will require my flock at their hands." [17] Teaching without example is like mortar without lime, dry and useless. "Thus saith the Lord God: I will break down the wall that you have daubed with untempered mortar." [18] Correct copies are made of correct, corrupt copies of corrupt books. Teaching by example makes a deeper impression than by words. "For the preaching of the one whose behavior is contemptuous, is worthless." [19] A superior ought to strive above all to make his subjects Christ-like, that is to say, imprint in them the form of the life and teaching of Christ, so that they may not only listen to him, but also imitate his virtues. Then he may say with St. Paul: "Be ye followers of God, as most dear children," and "My little children, of whom I am in labor again, until Christ be formed in you." [20] But as verbal instruction fails to enforce the teachings of Christ, superiors should

[17] Ezech. 34, 10.
[18] Ezech. 13, 14.
[19] St. Greg., *Hom. in Evan.*, l. 12, n. 1.
[20] Ephes. 5, 1; Galat. 4, 19.

exhibit its visible form in their lives, so that it become more deeply impressed upon their inferiors. Then they may say with the Apostle: "Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ's" [21]; in other words, if you desire a model of a Christlike life, behold it in my conduct, for, he says: "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me." [22] The representative of Christ ought to take His place in promoting His love, in strengthening His authority, and in reflecting His likeness. He should promote in his subjects what Christ desires, and by his authority accomplish what is expedient for them and exhibit in his life and conduct what is possible for them to imitate. "For," says St. Paul, "we preach not ourselves, but Jesus Christ, our Lord; and ourselves, your servants through Jesus." [23] He preaches himself and not Christ, who in his utterances seeks his own glory and by a bad example sets up himself rather than Christ as an example for imitation, as the same Apostle declares: "They are

[21] 1 Cor. 11, 1.
[22] Gal. 2, 20.
[23] 1 Cor. 4, 5.

zealous in your regard not well: but they would exclude you, that you might be zealous for them." [24] In other words, those who by their bad example keep you from imitating Christ, so that you learn to imitate their ways and follow their example, are not imbued with the right zeal, even though they be your superiors.

[24] Gal. 4, 17.

CHAPTER VI

PRUDENT DISCRETION

1. The sixth wing of the ecclesiastical Seraph is prudent discretion and thoughtful consideration of the things to be undertaken. How necessary these qualities are for the one who is to be superior over religious, Solomon shows. Being free to ask a favor from God, he set everything else aside and asked for wisdom, without which he declared himself unable to rule his people wisely. "Give therefore," he prayed, "to thy servant an understanding heart, to judge thy people, and discern between good and evil." [1] "To you, therefore, O kings, are these my words, that you may learn wisdom, and not fall from it." [2] "And now, O ye kings, understand: receive instruction, you that judge the earth." [3] A

[1] 3 Kings 3, 9.
[2] Wisd. 6, 10.
[3] Ps. 2, 10.

superior is a guide for the flock committed to his care, and if he errs, the flock is confused and led astray. As the eye is the light of the body, so the shepherd is the light of the flock entrusted to him. "You are the light of the world, . . . so let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works."[4] As the eye is either keen or dim, so the body is guided by it either in the right or in the wrong direction.

2. A twofold prudence is necessary for a superior. He should know what is to be done and how it is to be done. For a good act is not good of itself unless it is done well, that is to say, done as it ought to be done. "Cast discretion to the winds," says St. Bernard, "and virtue becomes a vice."[5] Without it zeal becomes rashness. "They have a zeal of God," says St. Paul, "but not according to knowledge."[6] Without prudence compassion lapses into trivial sentimentality under the guise of affection. "He that spareth the rod,"

[4] Matth. 5, 14.
[5] *Serm. in Cant.*, 49, n. 5.
[6] Rom. 10, 2.

declares the Wise Man, "hateth his son," [7] that is to say, he who under the guise of affection fails to correct the erring, ruins his soul. Patience without prudence arouses contempt against authority, since such a superior under the cloak of humility fails to repress the disobedient. "Roboam was inexperienced and of a fearful heart, and could not resist them," [8] namely, those who set themselves against him and the Lord. Finally, without prudence good example is worthless for the edification of others, as good food without salt is not relished. For this reason the Lord prescribed offerings of salt with the oblations,[9] and in Genesis He says: "If thou do well, shalt thou not receive? If ill, shall not sin forthwith be present at thy door?" [10] In other words, it is not enough to do a good thing, but one must also consider how, when, where, and why to act.

3. There are many things concerning which a superior ought to exercise prudence,— so

[7] Prov. 13, 24.
[8] 2 Paralip. 13, 7.
[9] Levit. 2, 10.
[10] Gen. 4, 7.

many that they cannot be touched upon in a brief treatise like this. But there seem to be principally four, about which he ought to exercise thoughtful consideration. In the Book of Exodus the high priest is directed, when entering the holy of holies, to carry upon his breast among other ornaments "the rational of Justice," "and set in it four rows of stones." [11] Like the high priest entering the holy of holies to serve the Lord, a superior assumes the care of souls to render to God a most acceptable service by attending to their salvation; for there is no offering more acceptable to God than zeal for souls. A superior must, therefore, among other qualifications, bear upon his breast, as it were, four qualities. The first of these is ability to govern those committed to his care, so that his good subjects advance and persevere. The second, ability to correct and amend those that have erred and sinned. The third, ability to dispose of the business matters requiring his attention. The fourth, ability to guard and

[11] Ex. 28, 15, 17, 20.

conduct himself prudently in all these things. The three precious stones are the three qualities pertaining to these four qualifications.

4. To know distinctly the *character, conscience* and *abilities* of his subjects, so that the duties of regular observance are assigned to each according to the best interests of all, is a prime requirement in a superior. All cannot do everything in the same manner, but, as St. Paul says: "Everyone hath his proper gift from God; one after this manner, and another after that." [12] God prescribed: "Aaron and his sons shall go in, and they shall appoint every man his work, and shall divide the burdens that every man is to carry." [13] Aaron and his sons represent the major and minor superiors, who ought to enter into, and impose upon each the duties of the regular observance according to custom. As there are three grades of this observance, they form three jewels in the first field of the four forms described above.

5. The first matter for a superior to attend

[12] 1 Cor. 7, 7. [13] Num. 4, 19.

to consists in that which, according to the form of each one's profession, is *necessary for salvation.* This is so intimately connected with the order and the rule that heedless transgression of it is a grievous sin. Such is obedience, voluntary poverty, chastity, and whatever is commanded under the binding power of obedience. In regard to these matters a superior has no power to dispense, since even he is bound to keep them. It is a superior's duty to watch carefully over these matters, because he is bound to watch zealously over their observance, to urge those who are refractory to observe them, and for no reason whatever to allow, as far as he is concerned, any one to act contrary to them, even though this would cause great hardship or loss to him or his brethren. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ," says St. Paul, "shall tribulation? or distress? or famine? or nakedness? or danger? or persecution? or the sword?" [14] He meant to say: none of these. This is a reply to those who say: if the needs of the

[14] Rom. 8, 25.

brethren are not supplied in one way or another, they cannot live. Since such a form of collecting is opposed to the Rule, a scandal and disgrace to the religous life, it is better for religious not to remain in a place where they cannot or will not live as such; for then they shall neither perish themselves nor shall others be scandalized by them. "He that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea." [15] What shall be said of those who scandalize many? This reflection ought to be the first stone shining on the breast of the religious superior, and is to be guarded above all.

6. The second point pertains to those things that refer to *the practice of higher perfection,* namely, extraordinary patience, exalted humility, heroic charity, strict temperance, rare poverty, sublime devotion, and similar virtues. To these the superior ought to lead those committed to his care by exhortations, admoni-

[15] Matth. 18, 6.

tions, and attractive example, rather than by compulsion, when they are tardy or remiss. For the counsels of perfection are recommended, not commanded, with the exception of those that fall within the limits of the vow, as, for example, continence. The principal reason for the institution of monastic life, however, was that it might be a wrestling school for exercising in perfection. In the palaestra the wrestlers were stripped to the buff and rubbed with oil, so that they could not be gripped by their opponents. This is an apt figure of the struggle going on in the religious life. "Every one that striveth for the mastery," says St. Paul, "refraineth himself from all things." [16] A superior, therefore, should also carry this gem upon his breast when teaching and urging his followers not only to walk on the path that leads to salvation, but also to strive after the perfection that will secure for them great glory in heaven.

7. The third object of a superior's care and attention are those things which are *neither*

[16] 1 Cor. 9, 25.

purely necessary for salvation nor *form the subject of higher perfection,* but which are nevertheless appropriately assigned by the Holy Fathers for the acquisition and preservation of both as exercises of good works, as ornaments of a religious life, and as means of edifying those that observe them. Such are: fasting, silence, the solemn celebration of the divine office, and corporal exercises. These, according to the Apostle,[17] are as useful as instruments to artists, though they can be performed without tools, as it were, by experts, because the arts existed long before such special tools. Hence a prudent superior, if necessity or utility demand, will dispense in such things without difficulty according to the requirements of time and place, when he sees that it is expedient to do so. Where, however, neither necessity nor utility justifies a dispensation, he will seek to have these things performed. To know how to observe the golden mean between rigor and laxity requires considerable discretion in a superior. If he were too rigorous, he would

[17] 1 Tim. 4, 8.

make himself disagreeable to his brethren and they would be less disposed to practice those virtues which are more useful and necessary; whereas, if he were more indulgent than he ought to be, relaxation of discipline would quickly follow. "He that contemneth small things, shall fall little by little." [18]

8. A superior must also *exercise prudence in correcting sinners.* This is the second row of precious stones and contains three jewels. For there are three forms of discretion, as there are three kinds of delinquents. Some delinquents, after a fall, soon apply *the remedy of penance,* urged thereto either by the interior voice of conscience or by external correction on the part of others. The spiritual physician ought to apply the remedy of penance with the balm of compassion tempered in such a manner that sinners may render satisfaction to God for their offences and repair the scandal they have given, so that others may be filled still more with the fear of sin, while the penitents themselves, finding it such an easy rem-

[18] Eccles. 19, 1.

edy, do not regret that they have submitted to the penance imposed. St. Paul says: "If a man be overtaken in any fault, you, who are spiritual [physicians] instruct such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted;" [19] in other words, impose such a penance upon the sinner that he may realize the gravity of his fault, yet treat him with the clemency with which you would desire to be treated by others were you to fall into a similar sin. Such discretion is one of the jewels of the second order.

9. Others, when they have sinned, conceal, excuse, and defend their fault. The venom of sin festers in their conscience, and although the superior may judge from certain symptoms that putrid poison has collected there, still it does not break forth, either by evident facts or voluntary confession, so that it could be lanced at the proper moment with the scalpel of public correction. If he reproves the delinquent, nothing is gained, and he seems rather to excite his evil passions than to correct the erring

[19] Gal. 6, 1.

brother. If he falters and dissembles, he is tormented and filled with anxiety for the soul of the brother as well as for his own, because he fails to correct a delinquent. Since he cannot, therefore, fitly do anything else in the circumstances, he ought to keep his own counsel and practice patience. What he cannot do by persuasion, he should seek to accomplish by prayer, in order that God may soon convert the erring subject or bring to light his hidden malice for the purpose of applying a suitable remedy. Thus for some time Our Lord silently tolerated His betrayer, Judas, for He omitted to reprove him publicly until his wickedness grew so enormous that it came to light by itself. Although, while it remained a secret, he — Judas — was afflicted with a deadly malady of the soul, still his evil condition injured no one, and hence he could without any blame to Jesus be tolerated in silence. "Suffer both," namely, "the cockle and the wheat, to grow until the harvest," [20] says Our Lord in reference to such a condition, and the

[20] Matt. 13, 30.

Apocalypse says: "He that is filthy, let him be more filthy still." [21] But such persons ought, when possible, to be prudently deterred from the occasion of sin, and in common with others admonished to reform. This Our Lord did for Judas when He said: "Woe to that man by whom the Son of Man shall be betrayed." [22] Since Judas, however, could not have fallen into such a dreadful sin unless he had gradually and repeatedly hardened his heart in crime, it is evident that he was secretly tolerated for some time in his evil state by Our Lord, who may have said: "I am silent, and as one that seeth not." [23] Such dissembling in the heart of a superior requires a high degree of prudence in order not to deflect him from the path of justice. This is the second gem in the second row of jewels that should shine upon the breast of a superior.

10. The third kind of delinquent religious are *guilty* of *grievous and public faults* and *receive no proper correction,* or receive it per-

[21] Apoc. 22, 11.
[22] Matt. 26, 24.
[23] Isaias 57, 11.

versely, because they do not mend their conduct and others are led into evil through them, or scandalized by them, or begin to imitate them, when they see that they sin without being punished, desiring to be spared themselves as the others are spared. Wherever these four conditions concur,— namely, grievous and public transgression, no hope of correction on account of obstinacy or an inveterate habit of sin, infection of others by bad example, or scandal by toleration,— nothing remains to be done but to cast away the rotten egg and cut off the putrid member, lest sound organs become infected and corrupted. This the Holy Ghost enjoins in the following passage: "I would they were even cut off, who trouble you." [24] "Put away the evil one from among you." [25] "If the unbeliever depart, let him depart." [26] "Cut it [the unfruitful fig-tree] down therefore: why cumbereth it the ground?" [27] "Every tree that bringeth not

[24] Gal. 5, 12.
[25] 1 Cor. 5, 13.
[26] 1 Cor. 7, 15.
[27] Luke 13, 7.

forth good fruit, shall be cut down." [28] "Command the children of Israel, that they cast out of the camp every leper, and whosoever hath an issue of seed, or is defiled by the dead, . . . lest they defile it." [29] Superiors should not, however, be impelled to take such measures by mere impulse, but seek the mature advice of prudent persons imbued with the spirit of God and the gift of counsel. The Holy Ghost says: "Do nothing without counsel, and thou shalt not repent when thou hast done." [30] And Christ declares: "He that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea." [31] In other words, the one who, in the habit of a religious, by his conduct scandalizes rather than edifies the simple-minded, deserves to be sentenced to expulsion, lest his evil example contaminate the community.

[28] Matt. 3, 10.
[29] Numb. 5, 2, 3.
[30] Ecclus. 32, 24.
[31] Matt. 18, 6.

11. The third sphere in which prudence and discretion are to be exercised, are the *business affairs* that a superior has to attend to. Some of these he must delegate to others, some he must attend to himself, others he must put away as far as possible. Thus Christ left some things to His disciples, as, for instance, money matters to Judas, and retained for Himself the office of preaching and curing the sick. When requested to settle a dispute about an inheritance among brothers, He answered: "Who hath made me judge, or divider, over you?" [32]

12. If he desires to attend personally to the *external and temporal needs of the body,* a superior is prevented from attending to the interior and better things, for when the mind is diverted to external affairs, it is apt to neglect the interior and urgent needs of the soul. The Lord enjoined upon Moses: "Be thou to the people in those things that pertain to the Lord, . . . that so it may be lighter for thee, the burden being shared out unto others." [33] A

[32] Luke 12, 13, 14. [33] Ex. 18, 19, 22.

similar injunction is indicated in the Acts: "It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables." [34] If a superior has no one to whom he can commit the care for externals, it would be better to suffer losses than that he himself should be occupied with temporal affairs. Christ, who knew Judas to be a thief, nevertheless permitted him to attend to business affairs. "He was a thief, and having the purse, carried the things that were put therein." [35] The example of Our Lord contradicts those who easily find others to whom they can commit the care of souls in order to attend to business affairs themselves, though it is an incomparably greater injustice to imperil immortal souls than to suffer the loss of earthly things.

13. A director of souls and superior ought to reserve for himself *the care of spiritual things* and whatever is necessary for salvation and progress in virtue, as these matters pertain to the very substance of his official position and he shall have to render an account of them

[34] Acts 6, 2. [35] John 12, 6.

above all others before the judgment seat of God. They are the following: the manner in which the rule and other regulations and the discipline of the order are kept; peace and charity among the brethren; knowledge of the character of each and solution of their difficulties; foresight and prevention of the danger of sinning; admonition of their subjects to advance in virtue; correction of what should be corrected, solving doubts, instructing all how to attend to the obligations assigned to them in a proper manner, so that they may please their brethren as much as possible and not act contrary to the dictates of conscience. When, however, it is impossible to satisfy others without offending God, God must be obeyed and patience practiced, for " we ought to obey God, rather than men." [36] The religious superior is *the head of the body* of the brotherhood. While the other members are employed in the duties assigned to each, the head, who is placed over all, shall provide for all as the center of all the senses ruling the whole body and trans-

[36] Acts 5, 29.

mitting to all the individual impulses of the senses as well as the emotions through commands or concessions of holy obedience, as the nerve centers do in the body. For the head is not employed in a single form of action, in order that it may devote itself to provide for all the members; it serves all; it sees, hears, tastes, and speaks for all. A superior's position is similar in regard to his subjects. St. Paul says: "They [the superiors] watch as being to render an account of your souls." [37]

14. *Superfluous matters* and such as are not necessary for the salvation or spiritual advancement of souls, a superior should endeavor to avoid and keep away from himself and his brethren as much as possible. For since on account of lack of time and "the evil of the day" [38] it is almost impossible to attend to necessary matters, we cannot look after superfluous or other people's affairs without neglecting what is better and more necessary. A mind distracted with many cares is less able to attend to its duties properly. When su-

[37] Heb. 13, 17. [38] Matt. 6, 34.

periors and religious immerse themselves too deeply in external occupations, such as building, writing books, law-suits, etc., which they had better omit, it sometimes happens that they not only neglect the better things, but also burden their conscience with sin. Business cares dull the mental vision for spiritual and internal things and quench the ardor of the soul for heaven. As pus gathers where there is a wound, which, unless it is removed, causes a sore or ulcer, so business cares may multiply so as to extinguish the spirit that should dominate them. A prudent superior should foresee the consequences of every act and carefully consider what ought to be permitted and what is expedient. Ecclesiasticus utters this warning: "My son, meddle not with many matters."[39] It is foolish for one who carries a heavy burden to add to it unnecessarily.

15. Above all, a superior should *exercise discretion concerning himself,* lest, while providing for others, he neglect himself, and in saving others, imperil his own salvation.

[39] Ecclus. 11, 10.

There should always be present to him the words: "What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffereth the loss of his own soul?" [40] This is the fourth row of gems, containing a threefold discretion as three precious stones. St. John says in his second Epistle: "Look to yourselves, that you lose not the things which you have wrought (in others) but that you may receive a full reward." [41]

16. A superior's first care should be a *serene conscience.* His conscience, that is, should always *be sound and pure.* It is sound when he desires, undertakes, commands or permits nothing that is forbidden, improper, or contrary to his holy profession, or in which there is sin or scandal. It is pure when he seeks not the approval of others for the good that he accomplishes or promotes, nor is pleased with himself in a disorderly manner on account of it, but seeks in all things to please God alone, so that what he does in His stead, *i. e.,* as His representative, he does for His sake or out

[40] Matt. 16, 25. [41] 2 John 1, 8.

of love for Him. "If thy eye be single," says Jesus, "thy whole body shall be lightsome;" [42] that is, if the intention is pure through charity, the entire body of good works performed will be worthy of eternal reward. "But if thy eye be evil, thy whole body shall be darksome." [43] Let the superior, therefore, examine his conscience and carefully consider what he has done, what he has omitted that ought to have been done, and from what motives he has acted. He should grieve over his faults, confess, correct, and avoid them; but regarding the good he has done, he should glory not in himself, but "in the Lord." [44] St. Paul says: "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." [45] He who brushes the dust from another can scarcely avoid being soiled himself, so that he must also dust himself. "Physician, heal thyself." [46] A superior may, of course, rejoice over the good he has done, but he must not exalt himself,

[42] Matt. 6, 22.
[43] Matt. 6, 23.
[44] 1 Cor. 1, 31.
[45] 1 Cor. 11, 31.
[46] Luke 4, 23.

considering that God gave him the grace to think, speak, and act not for himself alone, but for those over whom he has been placed.

17. He should also *watch over his conduct and utterances,* by which he is in duty bound to benefit others rather than himself. He who is compelled to live as an example to others, and to satisfy all, needs great discretion to stick to the golden mean, lest he be either too sad or too merry, too severe or too lenient, too jolly or too stern, too harsh or too mild, too strict or too lax, too often with guests or too seldom, too choice or too sparse in reflection, too observant or too careless in regard to the doings of the brethren, too familiar with some and too neglectful of others. He cannot always please everybody, but he will err less by permitting kindness to influence his conduct, which renders him more amiable to his subjects and induces them to obey him more willingly, have recourse to him with greater confidence in their troubles, and imitate his example more zealously. His power and authority causes his subjects to fear

him sufficiently; if to it he adds austere severity, he burdens the minds of his subjects. "You ruled over them with rigor, and with a high hand and my sheep were scattered." [47] "Be not as a lion in thy house, terrifying them of thy household." [48] This is the reason why Our Lord Jesus, the Supreme Pastor, has given us such a noble example of kindness and charity and made Himself so loveable and so easily imitable that through the love of His humanity He draws us to the love and knowledge of His Divinity. "While we visibly recognize God, we are drawn by Him to the love of invisible things." [49] He who takes the place of Christ should strive above all to make himself beloved by his subjects, so that he may the more easily draw them to the love of Christ. In doubtful matters he should always incline to what, according to his best judgment, is more in conformity with charity, humility, purity, and evangelical perfection.

[47] Ez. 34, 4.
[48] Ecclus. 4, 35.
[49] Preface of the Nativity.

18. This quality of discretion, which determines all other things, should also lead the superior to *give due attention to himself,* in order that his discretion may not be like the eye of the body, which, though it sees other things, does not see itself; in other words, "not to be more wise than it behooveth to be wise." [50] A superior should not trust himself more than is expedient, nor be wise in his own eyes, because, according to St. Gregory, "as subjects are tempted to criticise superiors because they do not act right in many things, so superiors are tempted to consider themselves wiser than the rest." [51] The Book of Proverbs says: "Hast thou seen a man wise in his own conceits? There shall be more hope of a fool than of him." [52] For the fool, lacking confidence in himself, seeks advice from the wise man, in order to avoid mistakes; but he who presumes more than he ought upon his own judgment, even in erring, very often imagines himself to be right. The most dangerous

[50] Rom. 12, 3.

[51] *Moral.,* 34, c. 3, n. 50.

[52] Prov. 26, 12.

temptation for every Christian soul seems to be to trust too much to one's own judgment. No one is so keen as not to err in some things, and hence he who imagines that he is always entirely right, deliberately opens the door for the tempter, who enters with various temptations under the semblance of good. "He sitteth in ambush," says the Psalmist, "with the rich in private places, that they may kill the innocent." [53] The evil spirit lays more snares when he knows a greater measure of success is obtainable. So he seeks the destruction of "the innocent" when the latter expects to serve God more than him. Hence it is always a matter of prudence for a superior to listen cheerfully to advice and to seek it humbly.

19. There is a threefold advantage in doing this. First, the superior is more certain of not becoming the victim of deception, when others think just as he does. Secondly, if a mistake occurs after he has acted upon the advice of others, it cannot be imputed to him

[53] Ps. 9, 28.—Hebr. Ps. 10, 8.

in the same degree as if he had acted solely on his own judgment. Thirdly, to those who observe this rule God, as a reward of humility, often gives the grace of learning, either through themselves or through others, what they did not know before. For this reason Moses, to whom God spoke face to face,[54] gladly took and followed the advice of his father-in-law, Jethro.[55] The Holy Ghost by His inspiration induced St. Paul to go to Jerusalem and consult with his fellow apostles, Peter, John, and James, about the Gospel which he had learned through revelation from Jesus Christ,[56] in order that he might be more certain in his preaching and not disagree with them, thus giving the faithful an example of seeking advice from their superiors. "My son," says Sirach, "do thou nothing without counsel, and thou shalt not repent when thou hast done."[57] Some, as soon as they are raised to the position of superior, consider themselves so filled with the spirit of wisdom

[54] Ex. 33, 11.
[55] Ex. 18, 18.
[56] Gal. 2, 1.
[57] Ecclus. 32, 24.

that they regard everything their predecessors have done as wrong and foolish. Others, when relieved of office, condemn whatever their successors do, blind to the fact that, as they disparage the acts of others, so others underrate theirs. "Woe to thee," exclaims Isaias, "that despisest, shalt not thyself also be despised?"[58] For nobody's acts are, as a rule, so minutely and industriously criticised by others as the acts of those who themselves severely criticise others, when they are accidentally found reprehensible in matters about which they censure others.

20. There are two kinds of persons whose advice a prudent superior should not easily accept, namely, *flatterers* and *detractors*. The former induce him to trust in himself more than is right. "They that call thee blessed, the same deceive thee, and destroy the way of thy steps,"[59] lest you think yourself right in humility of self-knowledge. Detractors induce a superior to suspect others and to have a less worthy opinion of them than he may

[58] Is. 33, 1. [59] Is. 3, 12.

have had, and to misjudge the innocent even before he has full knowledge of the truth. Of such the Book of Esther says: "With crafty fraud they deceive the ears of princes that are well meaning and judge of others by their own nature. . . . The good designs of kings are depraved by the evil suggestions of certain men, . . . who endeavor to undermine by lies such as observe diligently the offices committed to them, and do all things in such manner as to be worthy of all men's praise." [60] Advice is usually sought for three reasons, namely, for the sake of *enlightenment,* to clear up doubtful matters; for the sake of *authority,* to give it greater force because the question was discussed with certain persons; and for the sake of *peace,* that no one may have reason for complaint. The first renders superiors *more prudent;* the second, *more worthy* of advancement; the third, *serviceable* to all. But because there are countless individual cases in which prudence is necessary, no definite rule applicable to all can be given.

[60] Esther 16, 6, 7, 5.

CHAPTER VII

DEVOTION

1. The sixth and last wing of the ecclesiastical Seraph, without which the others can accomplish nothing, and which is, therefore, the most necessary of all, is piety or devotion to God. It incites zeal for justice, infuses loving compassion, strengthens patience, sets up an edifying example, and enlightens discretion. This is the "unction of the Spirit," teaching all things beneficial for salvation, as St. John says: "Let the unction which you have received from him, abide in you. And you have no need that any man teach you; but as his unction teacheth you of all things." [1]

2. Piety enlightens the mind to know what is best. "He [the Holy Ghost] will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind." [2]

[1] 1 John 2, 27. [2] John 14, 26.

It inflames the soul with a desire for what is good. "They that eat me, shall yet hunger; and they that drink me, shall yet thirst."[3] It infuses strength for attaining perfection. "It is God who worketh in you, both to will and to accomplish."[4] It engenders horror of sin. "I have hated and abhorred iniquity."[5] It leads to the practice of virtue.[6] "He brought me into the cellar of wine, he set in order charity in me."[7] It regulates external conduct and expression. "Never have I joined myself with them that play; neither have I made myself partaker of them that walk in lightness."[8] It renders knowledge of faith sweet. "For the wisdom of doctrine is according to her name,"[9] namely, delicious knowledge. It raises hope to confidence. "For the Spirit himself giveth testimony to our spirit, that we are sons of God."[10] It kindles the love of God. "The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts, by the Holy

[3] Ecclus. 24, 29.
[4] Phil. 2, 13.
[5] Ps. 118, 163.
[6] Apoc. 10, 10.
[7] Cant. 2, 4.
[8] Tob. 3, 17.
[9] Ecclus. 6, 23.
[10] Rom. 8, 16.

Ghost, who is given to us." [11] It places us on familiar terms with God. "The Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man is wont to speak to his friend." [12] It instills confidence towards God. "We have confidence towards God. And whatsoever we shall ask, we shall receive of him." [13] It enriches our prayers. "May thy whole burnt-offering be made fat," [14] and, "Make a fat offering." [15] It produces devotion and fervor. "Sweet, beneficent, and gentle is the spirit of wisdom." [16] It nourishes humility. "To whom shall I have respect, but to him that is poor and little." [17] It extracts the oil of the spirit as in a hot cauldron. It bestows constancy in adversity. "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?" [18] St. Paul in his devotion says: "Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ?" [19] It makes all good works delightful. "Her con-

[11] Rom. 5, 5.
[12] Ex. 33, 11.
[13] John 3, 21, 22.
[14] Ps. 19, 4.
[15] Ecclus. 38, 11.
[16] Wisd. 7, 22, 23.
[17] Is. 66, 2.
[18] Ps. 26, 1.
[19] Rom. 8, 35.

versation has no bitterness, nor her company any tediousness, but joy and gladness." [20] It raises the mind to heaven. "If he turns his heart to him, he shall draw his spirit and breath unto himself." [21] It engenders disgust for the world. "I have seen all things that are done under the sun, and behold all is vanity and vexation of spirit." [22] It arouses a desire for heavenly things. "I am straitened between two: having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ." [23] It wipes out sin and the punishment of sin. "Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much." [24] It increases supernatural merit. "If riches be desired in life, what is richer than wisdom, which maketh all things." [25] It greatly edifies our neighbor. "Offer sacrifice to God, incense and a good savour for a memorial." [26] "We are a good odour of Christ." [27] It drives away devils. "The smoke thereof driveth away all kinds of

[20] Wisd. 8, 16.
[21] Job 34, 14.
[22] Eccles. 1, 14.
[23] Phil. 1, 23.
[24] Luke 7, 47.
[25] Wisd. 8, 5.
[26] Ecclus. 45, 20.
[27] 2 Cor. 2, 15.

devils." [28] It invites the Angels and Saints. "Princes went before joined with singers." [29] "When thou didst pray with tears, . . . I offered thy prayer to the Lord." [30]

3. These and many other blessings are conferred by the grace of piety or devotion. Hence a superior who has to guide souls ought to make every effort to possess it, for by means of it he is always informed of what should be done, assisted in doing it, and safeguarded against neglect. He should not only pray for himself, but also for those that have been entrusted to his care and for those whom he is not able to preserve from evil without the help of God. "Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it." [31] The superior should be a mediator between God and his subjects, in order that, solicitous for the interests of God among them, while instructing, correcting, and guiding them on the way to higher things, he may also faithfully promote their interests before God by conciliating

[28] Tob. 6, 8.
[29] Ps. 67, 26.
[30] Tob. 12, 12.
[31] Ps. 126, 1.

Him, imploring His grace, and preserving the brethren from evil. Then he may say with Moses: "I was the mediator and stood between the Lord and you." [32]

4. Devotion may be *general,* or *special,* or *continuous.* It is general in divine office; special, in prayers; continuous, in the performance of all duties. In regard to the divine office, a superior must possess a threefold zeal; namely, to see that everything is done in an orderly manner and without mistakes. "Let all things be done decently, and according to order." [33] "David and the chief officers of the army separated for the ministry the sons of Asaph, of Ham and Idithun; to prophesy with harps, and with psalteries, and with cymbals according to their number serving in their appointed office." [34] He should also see to it that the work of the Lord, namely, the divine Office, is performed assiduously. "Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully." [35] He should see to its devout, rev-

[32] Deut. 5, 5.
[33] 1 Cor. 14, 40.
[34] 1 Paral. 25, 1.
[35] Jer. 48, 10.

erent, distinct, and attentive recitation, guarding against interruptions and disturbances, remembering that it is said: "With the whole heart and mouth praise ye Him and bless the name of the Lord." [36]

5. The Holy Ghost has commanded the recitation of the divine Office in the Church for *five reasons.* The first is *to imitate the heavenly choirs.* The Saints and Angels are unceasingly engaged in the presence of God in singing His praises. "Blessed are they," says the Psalmist, "that dwell in thy house, O Lord, they shall praise thee for ever and ever." [37] Christ, according to His promise, "Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world," [38] deigns to be truly with us here sacramentally as well as spiritually, and hence it behooves us to the best of our ability to render Him honor and praise according to the example of the celestial Spirits, so that even though we do not praise Him continuously, as those heavenly chanters do,

[36] Ecclus. 39, 41.
[37] Ps. 83, 5.
[38] Matth. 28, 20.

we sing at least from time to time His praises in spite of our frailty, imitating "that Jerusalem, which is above, . . . which is our mother." [39]

6. The divine Office has been established, secondly, that we should *render thanks to God* at certain hours, mindful of His blessings, and praying for His grace from time to time turn to Him, who was born of the Virgin Mary at night, dragged before the council at early morn, arose at daylight, was scourged at the third hour, and a little later sent the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles, was crucified at the sixth hour, died upon the cross at the ninth, and being at supper in the afternoon gave us the Sacraments, and was buried at Compline. The celebration of Holy Mass, however, not only reminds us of the mystery of His Passion, but also exhibits the grace of His Real Presence, and under the form of the Blessed Sacrament nourishes us in a spiritual manner with His Flesh and Blood. As it is right and proper, therefore, never to forget these things,

[39] Gal. 4, 26.

so it is also proper always to recall them at stated hours. "I will remember," says the Prophet, "the tender mercies of the Lord, the praise of the Lord for all the things that the Lord hath bestowed on us." [40]

7. In the third place the divine Office was established, in order that through it we may be continuously incited to devotion and kindled with the love of God, lest through indolence and the multitude of our occupations our love grow lukewarm. In the Book of Leviticus the Lord says: "This is the perpetual fire which shall never go out on the altar. . . . The priest shall feed it, putting wood on it every day in the morning." [41] This fire is the fervor of devotion, which ought always to burn on the altar of our heart, which the devout priest ought to nourish constantly by putting on it the fuel of divine praises, that it may never be extinguished. "I will bless the Lord at all times, His praises shall be always in my mouth." [42]

[40] Is. 63, 7.
[41] Lev. 6, 13, 12.
[42] Ps. 33, 2.

8. The fourth reason for which the divine Office was instituted is that we may through it draw the faithful, who know how to set aside certain hours for prayer, to the practice of devotion, so that they may assemble in church at least when the offices of divine praise are performed therein, and be less easily distracted when they see the clerics celebrating the divine Office. "All the multitude of the people," says St. Luke, "was praying without, at the hour of incense."[43] Most people would scarcely ever devote themselves to prayer if they were not called to church from worldly occupations at stated times to engage in divine service and listen to the word of God.

9. The fifth purpose of the divine Office is to exhibit *the beauty of the Christian religion.* Jews, Gentiles, and heretics from time to time assemble in their churches to celebrate their false rites. It is evidently far more proper and fitting for those who have the true and holy mysteries of the Sacraments to assemble often for the purpose of celebrating and vener-

[43] Luke 1, 10.

ating them and performing the solemn service of praise due to the Creator. For by this means they make themselves worthy of more grace, and of eternal life, and the laity are led to love and revere their holy religion. "To the festivals he added beauty, and set in order the solemn times, . . . that they should praise the holy name of the Lord." [44]

Hence among all the external observances of religion the greatest attention ought to be given to the divine Office, so that, as has been said, [45] it may be performed in an orderly, earnest and devout manner. At other times we labor for God, but during the time of divine service we assist at His throne, are ready to listen to and address Him, and He addresses us, and at the same time we implore His help in our necessities.

10. Special devotion consists in private prayers; in the customary *recitation of vocal prayers,* such as psalms, litanies, and others, which each one performs in secret and according to his personal inclinations. "Thus shall

[44] Ecclus. 47, 12. [45] *Supra,* n. 4.

you pray," says Christ, "Our Father," etc.,[46] A second form of special prayer consists in *holy meditation,* when a person reflects upon his sins, misery, and future punishment, or recalls to mind the general and special favors he has received from God, the Passion of Christ, the sweet balm of His goodness and His promises of future reward, in order to derive from the consideration of these things sentiments of devotion, of fear and love of God, of desire, compunction and spiritual joy. "I meditated in the night with my own heart: and I was exercised and I swept my spirit."[47] Special devotion manifests itself, thirdly, in *pious aspirations,* tears and sighs, outbursts of love, and other internal and ineffable affections of the heart, in exaltations, ecstasies, raptures and absorption of the soul in God. Through these "he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit"[48] with Him through the light of pure intelligence, through the knowledge of God, the ardor of His love, and a sweet

[46] Matth. 6, 9.
[47] Ps. 76, 7.
[48] 1 Cor. 6, 17.

and intimate union full of joy. "The spirit himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings." [49]

11. If a superior by the cares and distractions of his office is prevented from devoting himself to special devotions and prayers, he should, at least occasionally when it is possible, and as it were by stealth, engage in the practice of prayer, that he may not become entirely cold, neglect prayer, become a stranger to God, and the grace of God's mercy may not insensibly, as it were, be withdrawn from him. This was the reason why Moses, when harassed by the care of the people, frequently sought solace in the Tabernacle, entering into familiar intercourse with God and being thereby refreshed in mind and heart. Christ, after preaching to the multitudes during the day, spent the nights alone in prayer. Although a superior may have little time for prayer, still, because it is his duty to pray for others, he may sometimes for their sake be vouchsafed a greater measure of grace, in order that he may

[49] Rom. 8, 26.

benefit also by praying those whom he benefits by his care and attention. But let him not neglect prayer, or refuse to improve the opportunity, when offered, lest he be deprived of the grace of prayer in punishment for his ingratitude.

12. Devotion should be *assiduous* or *continuous* in a superior, as in all that desire to advance in virtue. He should, first, constantly think of God. "I set the Lord always in my sight, . . . my eyes are ever towards the Lord."[50] Man ought to endeavor to find God everywhere and at every moment, as if He were really present in a visible manner. Elias and Eliseus were wont to say: "As the Lord liveth, in whose sight I stand."[51] For as the Angels do not cease to contemplate God wherever they are sent, so a virtuous man, as far as he is able, should never lose the thought of God from his heart. Should this ever happen, let him do penance. St. Bernard says: "Consider every moment lost in which you

[50] Ps. 15, 8; 24, 15.
[51] 3 Kings 17, 1; 18, 15: 4 Kings 3, 14.

do not think of God." [52] Even if you cannot always concentrate your mind on Him in meditation, direct it to Him at least by calling to mind His presence, and when an opportunity occurs, turn recollection into meditation or prayer, as an artist carries the materials for drawing about him in order to sketch a picture when he has an opportunity.

13. Secondly, a superior should *continually endeavor to please God by every word and deed,* always act as if He were present, avoid whatever is apt to displease Him, be sorry if he has done anything displeasing to God, and eager to please Him more and more. "We labor, whether absent or present, to please him. For we must all be manifest before the judgment seat of Christ." [53] A religious should always act as if he were about to appear before the tribunal of the Supreme Judge. "Be you then also ready; for at what hour you think not, the Son of Man will come." [54] He sees

[52] *Lib. Medit.,* c. 6, n. 18.
[53] 2 Cor. 5, 9.
[54] Luke 12, 40.

whatever we do, and as He does not forget the good works that merit reward, even though a long time may elapse, so also does He not forget the sins that deserve punishment if they are not purged from the soul by penance. "Every man that passeth beyond his own bed, despising his soul, and saying: Who seeth me? . . . No man seeth me: whom do I fear? the Most High will not remember my sins. . . . And he knoweth not that the eyes of the Lord are far brighter than the sun, beholding round about all the ways of men." [55]

14. The third form of assiduous or constant prayer consists in *doing everything devoutly* by directing at least the intention towards God, *strengthening* oneself *by prayer* for every eventuality, and *rendering thanks to and praising God* for every blessing. A superior should ask God to inspire him in the performance of his duties, to direct everything towards the attainment of salvation, to increase and preserve His blessings. As a sailor who sees a storm coming, hastens to reach a safe harbor,

[55] Ecclus. 23, 25, 27.

so the religious should always fly to the harbor of prayer, in which he may escape every danger, and, in all that he does, should trust more to prayer than to his own labors and exertions. "As we know not what to do, we can only turn our eyes to thee." [56] "As the eyes of servants are on the hands of their masters, . . . so are our eyes unto the Lord our God." [57]

CONCLUSION

Equipped with these and other wings, therefore, the ecclesiastical Seraph, that is to say, the religious Superior, should serve "the Lord sitting upon a throne high and elevated." [58] He raises the first pair of wings above his head, covers body and feet with the second, and flies far and high with the third, that the praise of men may not lessen his zeal nor carnal mindedness govern his conduct.

A good intention shall support him and fraternal charity elevate him to the enjoyment of a heavenly reward. "I have inclined my

[56] 2 Paral. 20, 12.
[57] Ps. 122, 2.
[58] Is. 6, 1 sqq.

heart to do thy justifications forever, for the reward." [59] Patience and an exemplary life will shield him from the arrows of confusion and the nakedness of poverty in supernatural merits. By them he is defended as by arms, and clothed as with holy vestments. "Put on thy strength, O Sion, put on the garments of thy glory." [60] Discretion will enable him to fly everywhere, seeing what must be done and how, and devotion will make it possible for him to "seek the things that are above; where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God." [61]

But though all who are placed over souls cannot have all these qualities in an equal measure, it is absolutely necessary for a superior not to be deficient in them altogether, because without them he cannot secure the blessing of edification for those over whom he is placed and of progress on the way to salvation. Every religious who has to govern himself and to account for others at the judgment seat of God, should be adorned and carried upward

[59] Ps. 118, 112.
[60] Is. 52, 1.
[61] Col. 3, 1.

by these wings, in order that he may be fervent in justice, compassionate towards others for God's sake, patient in adversity, edify others by a good example, be circumspect in all things, and, above all, be intimately united with God through prayer. The Lord will protect him, guide and advance him in all things, and finally give him the grace of soaring to the heavenly mansions — a grace that, we pray, may be granted to us by Jesus Christ. AMEN.

THE END

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